Hyde-Sermon, Dec. 22, 1820.

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SERMON

DELIVERED

AT

Lee, December 22nd, 1820;

BEING THE TWO HUNDREDTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE LANDING OF OUR ANCESTORS AT PLYMOUTH.

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SERMON.

PSALM XLIV. 1. 2. 3.

We have heard with our ears, O God, our fathers have told us, what work thou didst in their days, in the times of old. How thou didst drive out the heathen with thy hand, and plantedst them; how thou didst afflict the people, and cast them out For they got not the land in possession by their own sword, neither did their own arm save them: but thy right hand, and thine arm, and the light of thy countenance, because thou hadst a favour unto them.

REVOLVING time, whose progress no created arm can arrest nor retard, has brought us, protected by a merciful providence, to witness, this day, the completion of two hundred years, since the landing of our forefathers, at Plymouth. We have reached a period, which must excite a deep and lively interest in every reflecting mind, and which will be distinctly marked by the future historians of this country. A similar occasion has not occurred, within the recollection of the oldest person present, and will not again occur, until long after every individual, in this assembly, shall be numbered with the great congregation of the dead. Of all the children, which shall be born, within twenty years to come, few indeed will see the completion of another century. The occasion is a memorable one. Both reason and religion dictate, that we with our families appear, this day, before the Lord to refresh our minds with the wonderful works which he wrought, in planting our fathers in this land, and to erect a monument of praise to his great name.

The words which have been selected, as the foundation of a discourse, seemingly could not have describ-

ed the case of the pilgrims more perfectly, nor have been more appropriate to the present interesting occasion, if they had been dictated by the Holy Spirit for no other purpose. "We have heard with our ears, O God, our fathers have told us what work thou didst in their days, in the times of old. How thou didst drive out the heathen with thy hand, and plantedst them; how thou didst afflict the people, and cast them out. For they got not the land in possession, by their own sword, neither did their own arm save them: but thy right hand, and thine arm, and the light of thy countenance, because thou hadst a favour unto them." The writer of this Psalm, who was David or some other prophet, recollecting the instances of divine goodness and divine interposition, experienced by his fathers before him, and continued to his day, and the rich blessings and privileges, which Israel, as a people, enjoyed;—privileges, which pre-eminently distinguished them from surrounding nations, was led devoutly to make the acknowledgment in the text. It was the practice of the pious leaders in Israel to record all instances of special divine interposition, that the knowledge of them might be transmitted to succeeding generations to encourage their hope in the mercy and protection of the God of their fathers.

If any portion of people, on the earth, are under obligations to acknowledge that God has been favourable to them, and to their fathers before them, it is the people of New-England, the descendants of those pious pilgrims, who subjected themselves to all the dangers of the ocean, and the privations of a howling wilderness, to find a peaceful asylum in this new world. With a hope, my brethren, of awakening in our own breasts, and in the breasts of our children, the heaven-born feeling of pious gratitude, let us devoutly consider what works the Lord wrought in the days of our fathers, and mark some of the prominent instances o divine goodness to the people in this land. This is the appropriate business of this centurial celebration

they gave up themselves, *first unto God*, and *then to one another*, and solemnly engaged to maintain the worship of our Lord Jesus Christ, free from human inventions. Viewing the Act of Uniformity, passed by the first Parliament under queen Elizabeth, which was rigorously enforced, as destroying all their religious freedom, they conscientiously refused to conform. With the doctrines of faith, contained in the thirty-nine Articles, they fully accorded, but they considered the modes and forms of religious worship, imposed upon them by authority, as unscriptural. They not only separated themselves from the church of England, but they voluntarily embraced a banishment into Holland. After residing a short time at Amsterdam, to which place they first removed, they finally settled in the city of Leyden. This was about seven years from the time they entered into covenant with one another in England. "In that city," says Dr. Cotton Mather, "this people sojourned, an holy church of the blessed Jesus, for several years, under the pastoral care of Mr. John Robinson, who had for his help in the government of the church, a most wise, grave, good man, Mr. William Brewster, the ruling Elder." But it was not the will of the Head of the church, that this should be the place of their final residence. On witnessing the profanity of their neighbours, and their habitual violations of the sabbath, their minds were soon filled with deep concern for their posterity. It was with pain, that some of these pilgrims saw their sons, with a view of obtaining a livelihood, enter the Dutch armies and navy.

After much consultation, fasting and prayer, they resolved, if God should prosper them, and, in his providence open a way, to remove to America, having heard many favourable reports of this western world. This church had considerably increased, at Leyden, and contained three hundred communicants. It was resolved, that only a part of the church, consisting of younger members of the most vigorous con-

stitution, should first embark for America, and that the pastor should abide with the others, for a season, with the full expectation of following them, as soon as divine providence should render their removal expedient.

Having made the best arrangements they could, under their circumstances, and hired two ships, one called, The *Speed-well*, the other, The *May-Flower*, they once more solemnly set apart a day for fasting and prayer. On that occasion, Mr. Robinson preached from Ezra 8th, 21st.—*Then I proclaimed a fast there at the river Ahava, that we might afflict ourselves before our God, to seek of him a right way for us, and for our little ones, and for all our substance.* They now took their leave of the pleasant city, where they had been pilgrims and strangers for eleven years. Accompanied by their affectionate friends, they came to the sea-side, where they were to embark. Here, a scene opened, which no language can describe;—a scene, which even the Dutch spectators, standing on the shore, could not witness without being drowned in tears. Here, their beloved pastor, on his knees, poured out their mutual petitions unto God; and here, the pilgrims endeared to each other, by the strongest ties, wept in each others arms, until the wind and tide called them to bid adieu. This was on the 2nd day of July 1620.

On the 5th of August, they sailed from Southampton in England; but on account of unfavourable weather, and the unsafe condition of one of their vessels, they were obliged twice to put back, before they came to the *Land's End*. They were, at length compelled to dismiss the poorer vessel from their service, and then as many as could be accommodated, entered on board the other ship, the *May Flower*, and took their final departure from the land of their fathers, on the 6th day of September. One hundred and one persons of the adventurers embarked. Their voyage was tedious and perilous, but protected by the almighty

arm of Him, who controls the proud waves of the sea, and guides the storm, on the 10th of November following they fell in with the land, at *Cape Cod*, and going on shore, they took the humble posture of suppliants, and devoutly offered thanks to God for their preservation.

Their design was to have planted themselves near the mouth of Hudson's river; but their neighbours in Holland, having their eyes on that part of the country for a plantation, had influenced the master of the vessel to transport them to a different place. God, who is wonderful in counsel, over-ruled for their good what they considered, at first, as a great disappointment. The Indians, on the borders of Hudson's river, were, at that time, numerous and powerful, and had this feeble band of christians landed there, as they intended, they might all have been massacred. In the region of country where they arrived, there had just before been a sweeping mortality among the natives. It is supposed that nine tenths of them had been cut off, by a kind of plague. The first planters found vast numbers of their unburied carcases, wherever they went. "We have heard with our ears, O God, our fathers have told us, what work thou didst in their days, in the times of old. How thou didst drive out the heathen with thy hand, and plantedst them, how thou didst afflict the people, and cast them out."

While in the harbor of the Cape, our forefathers signed an instrument, as a foundation of their civil government, and chose Mr. John Carver, a pious and prudent man, to be their governor. Having spent a number of weeks, in exploring the inhospitable coast to which they had come, with a view to find the most eligible place for settlement, they at length, after many toils and perils, landed on the 22nd of December 1620. This day completes two centuries, since that interesting event. Recollecting that Plymouth was the last

place from which they sailed in England, they agreed to call their new settlement by the same name.

Who can think of the many trials, privations and sufferings of these our fathers, without sighing, and shedding the tear of pity! They landed in the midst of winter;—they were without shelter, and were subjected to incessant labour and hardship to prevent their immediately perishing with the cold. They were frail creatures, composed of flesh and blood, like other men, and could not sustain these hardships without injury. A general and very mortal sickness soon began among them, which, in two or three months, swept off about one half of their company. Of this small number, sometimes *two* and even *three* died in a day. They were not only destitute of comfortable accommodations to meet such scenes of distress, but very few of them were well at a time to take care of the sick. The most credible historians affirm, that they were four years, in this wilderness, without any domestic cattle for milk or labour. In repeated instances, under all their toils and fatigues, they supported life, for days and weeks together, without bread, feeding upon the wild nuts of the woods, and shell-fish. No such affecting narrative could be heard from those, who have lately emigrated from us to our western new settlements, nor from those who have gone to seek the spiritual welfare of the long neglected natives of the wilderness. But our pious fathers, being fully persuaded that they were pilgrims and strangers on the earth, did not murmur, nor lose their relish for the service of God. It was afterwards supposed by those, who seriously reflected on the providence of God, in the unusual mortality which has been noticed, that if so *many* of them had not been taken to a better world, a *famine* would probably have destroyed them all, before the arrival of their expected supplies from England.

On the 10th of November 1621, just one year from the time the first company reached the *Cape*, about

thirty-five of their friends from Holland arrived to join this little band and to strengthen their hands. Among these was Mr. Robert Cushman, a man of public education and distinguished for his piety. Soon after his arrival, he preached a sermon, at Plymouth, the object of which was to encourage the pilgrims to keep their property in common stock, so that no one should possess more than another. This sermon was printed in London in 1622, and afterwards re-printed in Boston. From the Preface annexed to the sermon, it appears that our fathers supposed New-England to be an Island, of about the size of England, separated from the main land in America, as England is from the main of Europe.

From this brief historical sketch, we see that our forefathers, the first settlers of New-England, were descendants of that class of people in England, who were denominated puritans ;—that they were men of great self-denial, and uncommon devotedness to God ;—that their object, in leaving their native land and coming to this country, was, that they might walk with God and one another, in the enjoyment of divine ordinances, according to the primitive pattern ;—and that, in accomplishing their design, they were called to endure unparalleled sufferings and hardships.

Such, my brethren, were the men, who first planted New-England, such, the motives by which they were actuated, and such the trials they endured, in opening a way to this new world.

I proceed,

II. To speak of their pious zeal and efforts to establish civil, religious and literary institutions, and to transmit them to posterity.

The many trials of these pilgrims did not make them forget their object, in coming to America. which was to lay a foundation for the enjoyment of civil and religious liberty, and to provide a peaceful asylum for the persecuted friends of the Redeemer. Civil government they considered as an *ordinance of God*,

and when established on principles founded on his holy word, and faithfully and impartially administered, an invaluable blessing to any community. The civil compact, which our fathers signed before they left the ship, in the harbor of the Cape, has the following preamble: "Having undertaken for the glory of God, and the advancement of the Christian faith, and honour of our king and country to plant the first colony &c." After the preamble, they solemnly engaged, in this instrument, "submission and obedience to the *laws*, *ordinances*, *acts*, *constitutions* and *officers* that from time to time should be thought most convenient for the good of the colony." I have already mentioned, that, at this time, they chose for their governor, Mr. John Carver. This worthy man died, early in the spring of 1621. The pilgrims, deeply impressed with the importance of civil government, chose Mr. William Bradford to succeed him. To these transactions of a few men we may trace the origin of the government of this Commonwealth, which has been so great a blessing to their posterity for two hundred years.

In the year 1630, the colony of Massachusetts was established, and Mr. John Winthrop was chosen governor. In honor of him it has been said, he was the Washington of his time. Three years after, the Rev. John Cotton, who had been settled at Boston in England, arrived, and being duly called, was set apart as a religious teacher in the town, which has long been the seat of government. The town was called Boston, in honor of Mr. Cotton, who removed from the town of that name in England. Mr. Hutchinson, the historian of Massachusetts, makes the most honourable mention of this divine. He has this remark, "Mr. Cotton is supposed to have been more instrumental in the settlement of their civil, as well as ecclesiastical polity than any other person." Another historian remarks, "The General Court, knowing that the political institutions of the *Israelites* have been the chief guide of all great legislators of ancient and modern

times, desired Mr. Cotton, with the assistance of Governor Winthrop, to make an abstract of the judicial laws of Moses, and prepare them for their adoption. These were approved by the General Court, and became the fundamental laws of the colony." It appears, that the laws enacted by the legislatures of the respective colonies were, essentially, of a similar character. "For laws of a *civil* nature," says the writer last referred to, "the laws of England were their principal guide; for those which respected the interests of religion and morals, the holy scriptures were their general standard."

These fathers, conscious that they were acting for posterity, acted with great caution and much prayerfulness. To their wisdom and efforts, under God, the people of New-England are indebted for the excellent constitutions of government, with which they have been blessed. In 1692, the colony of Massachusetts received a new charter, which included the colony of Plymouth, making them one colony.

Not only in civil, but ecclesiastical matters, the fathers of New-England acted with great caution and prayerfulness. Mr. Robinson, the beloved pastor of the distinguished church in Leyden, who intended to have followed that part of his flock which came to Plymouth, with the remainder, was prevented by his lamented death. The little flock, at Plymouth, was without a pastor to administer the sacraments to them, for nine years, though Mr. William Brewster statedly preached to them. In 1629, Mr. Ralph Smith took the pastoral charge of them, and was their first regular minister. None of the difficulties and embarrassments of these tried friends of the Redeemer hindered them from strictly observing the *Lord's day*, and spending it in the devout and pious exercises of religious worship. They also early set apart particular seasons for Fasting and Prayer, and Thanksgiving, and, eventually, observed them annually. This example has been followed by their descendants. Convincing

proof may hence be adduced of the vast influence, which the example of the first settlers of a country has on posterity. A single congregation, and that small in number, has, in this instance, diffused its influence over many hundred thousands of people.

The first church, which was organized in the colony of Massachusetts, was at Salem, in the year 1629. Dr. Cotton Mather, in his history of New-England, gives the following account of the steps they took on this interesting occasion. "They resolved, like their father Abraham, to begin their plantation with calling on the name of the Lord." "Whereupon having the concurrence and countenance of their deputy governor, John Endicott Esq. and the approving presence of the messengers from the church of Plymouth, they set apart the sixth day of August, after their arrival, for fasting and prayer, for the settling of a church-state among them, and for their making a confession of their faith, and entering into an holy Covenant, whereby that church-state was formed." In their religious sentiments, they were Calvinists. They believed in the totally ruined state of all men, by nature;—the necessity of a change of heart, by the spirit of God;—the real divinity of the Saviour;—the eternal election of all that are saved, and other doctrines connected with these.

The covenant into which this first church in Massachusetts entered, has been preserved, in Dr. Mather's Magnalia, and as it exhibits the most correct view we can have of the spirit of our forefathers, it may be useful to recite it, at full length, as a monument of their devotedness to Christ. "We covenant with our Lord, and one with another; and we do bind ourselves, in the presence of God, to walk together in all his ways, according as he is pleased to reveal himself unto us in his blessed word of truth; and do explicitly, in the name and fear of God, profess and

protest to walk as followeth, through the power and grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.—We avouch the Lord to be our God, and ourselves to be his people, in the truth and simplicity of our spirits. We give ourselves to the Lord Jesus Christ, and the word of his grace for the teaching, ruling and sanctifying of us in matters of worship and conversation, resolving to cleave unto him alone for life and glory, and to reject all contrary ways, canons, and constitutions of men in his worship.—We promise to walk with our brethren, with all watchfulness and tenderness, avoiding jealousies and suspicions, backbitings, censurings, provokings, secret risings of spirit against them; but in all offences to follow the rule of our Lord Jesus, and to bear and forbear, give and forgive, as he hath taught us. In public or private, we will willingly do nothing to the offence of the church; but will be willing to take advice for ourselves and ours, as occasion shall be presented. We will not in the congregation be forward either to show our own gifts and parts in speaking or scrupling, or there discover the weakness or failings of our brethren; but attend an orderly call thereunto, knowing how much the Lord may be dishonored, and his gospel, and the profession of it, slighted by our distempers and weaknesses in public.—We bind ourselves to study the advancement of the gospel in all truth and peace, both in regard of those that are within or without; no way slighting our sister churches, but using their counsel, as need shall be; not laying a stumbling block before any, no, not the Indians whose good we desire to promote; and so to converse, as we may avoid the very appearance of evil.—We do hereby promise to carry ourselves in all lawful obedience to those that are over us, in church or Commonwealth, knowing how well-pleasing it will be to the Lord, that they should have encouragement in their places, by our not grieving their spirits through our irregularities. We resolve to approve ourselves to the Lord in our particular callings; shunning idleness

as the bane of any state; nor will we deal hardly, or oppressingly with any, wherein we are the Lord's stewards.—Promising also unto our best ability to teach our children and servants the knowledge of God, and of his will, that they may serve him also; and all this not by any strength of our own, but by the Lord Christ, whose blood we desire may sprinkle this our Covenant made in his name."—Here, my brethren, is presented to us a sample of the excellent spirit, by which our fathers were actuated, in religious and ecclesiastical matters.

Nor did they over-look the importance of *learning* to a community. Their attention to this subject was early and zealously manifested, from a full conviction, that without providing the means of education, and raising up literary Institutions, darkness would soon cover the land, and gross darkness the people. Many of the first ministers of New-England were not only men of distinguished talents and eminent piety, but they were men of extensive erudition. They had been favoured with all the advantages for a deep and thorough acquaintance with the sciences, which the best Colleges in England could afford. Such were the Rev. John Cotton, settled in Boston,—the Rev. Thomas Hooker, settled in Hartford, and the Rev. John Davenport, settled in New-Haven. Among the adventurers to this new world, there were also *civilians*, no less distinguished for their piety and learning. Such were Governors Bradford, Endicott and Winthrop. Learned themselves, and feeling the importance of learning to the rising colonies, which they had been instrumental of planting, they turned their thoughts, with no little zeal, upon the great subject of founding a College. As early as the year 1736, the General Court advanced a small sum with reference to this object. This sum was soon augmented, by the liberality of private benefactors, especially by the donation of the Rev. John Harvard; and in 1640, Harvard

College arose with a President, the Rev. Henry Dunster, at its head.

From the facts which have been stated, we have a view of the pious zeal and efforts of our fathers to establish civil, religious and literary institutions, and to transmit them to posterity.

The way is prepared to consider,

III. The rapid *growth* of New-England, and the progress of religion and literature in it.

In reviewing the providences of God in relation to this country, we notice many dispensations, which, at particular seasons, must have greatly retarded its growth. In the early settlement of New-England, many towns were visited with pestilential and mortal sickness, by which great numbers were brought down to the grave, in the midst of their usefulness. Our fathers also were often scourged and desolated by Indian wars. Many of their flourishing towns were burnt to ashes, and the inhabitants of them carried into captivity. They were under the necessity of following the example of pious Nehemiah, and his company, when engaged in rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem. It was a common thing for the people to go to their daily labour with their *arms*, and notwithstanding all their vigilance and precaution, they were often attacked and cut off in their fields, by the savages.

In the year 1637, was the famous Pequod war, and on the 26th of May of the same year, the decisive battle was fought, in the south-east part of Connecticut, conducted by Capt. Mason. A more hazardous or successful enterprize was scarcely ever undertaken.

Notwithstanding all these distressing calamities, New-England progressed in her settlements, and new branches of the visible church of Christ were continu-

ally rising to view. In 1623, a few persons began a settlement at Portsmouth, in New-Hampshire. In 1635, settlements were begun, at Hartford, Windsor and Wethersfield, on Connecticut River. In 1636, at Providence. About 76 years after the landing of our fathers at Plymouth, Dr. Cotton Mather wrote his Magnalia, in which he makes the following record: "I have heard an aged saint near his death cheerfully thus express himself: Well, I am going to heaven, and I will there tell the faithful, who are gone long since from New-England, thither, that though they who gathered our churches are all dead and gone, yet the churches are still alive, with as numerous flocks of christians as ever were among them."

With a view to promote and perpetuate union in the churches, the ministers and delegates of the several churches in Massachusetts, Connecticut and New-Haven assembled at Cambridge in 1648, and with great unanimity adopted the Confession of Faith, composed by the venerable assembly of divines at Westminster, as the basis of their union, and also a form of church government. These, being approved and adopted, were, for many years, the constitution of the New-England churches. With respect to church government and discipline, they were Congregational in their sentiments; but they were impressed with the importance of *union* in the several churches.

Of Massachusetts, Mr. Huchinson observes, "During the fifty years the charter continued, there were very few instances of any society of Christians differing professedly, in doctrine, discipline, or form of worship, from the established churches. The number of Baptists was small. The Quakers came over in small parties, yet they were never numerous enough to form a society of any consequence, except upon the borders of Rhode-Island. Nor was there any Episcopal church in any part of the colony, until the char-

ter was vacated." Dr. Trumbull, in his history of Connecticut, says, the following account was publicly given of the religious state of the Connecticut colony in 1680 :—" Our people in this colony are some of them strict congregational men, others, more large congregational men, and some moderate presbyterians. The congregational men of both sorts are the greatest part of the people in the colony."

New-England has been signally favoured, at different periods, with the influences of the Holy Spirit. Between the years 1740 and 1750, the Lord rained down a rain of righteousness, on a great part of the towns, which were then settled, and doubtless gathered a multitude of souls into the kingdom of Christ. Very few of the subjects of this work now remain on the earth. They have left this world for a better, and have entered into their rest. But they have left behind the happy fruits of their many *prayers*, especially in the powerful and extensive revivals of religion, within our own memory. Ours has been, on the whole, a remarkable day for the special favours of God. We have been eye and ear-witnesses of wonderful things. Though we have to lament the prevalence of great and alarming errors, in some sections of Massachusetts, yet we are bound gratefully to acknowledge, that the number of Christ's friends has greatly increased.

According to the best calculations, which I have been able to make, there are, at the present time, in the State of Massachusetts 371 Congregational, 142 Baptist, 20 Episcopalian and 20 Methodist Churches, making in the whole 553 churches. In Maine, which is now a distinct State, there are 120 Congregational, 134 Baptist, 2 Episcopalian and 32 Methodist churches, making in the whole 288 churches. In Connecticut, there are 211 Congregational, 82 Baptist and 67 Episcopalian churches, making in the whole 360 churches. In these *three States*, which are but a part

of New-England, there are 702 Congregational churches, and, including other denominations of christians, there are considerably more than 1200 churches. From this imperfect calculation, which, it is presumed, does not exceed facts, we have opportunity to take a view of the rapid and wonderful extension of the Redeemer's kingdom in this land.

Since the revolutionary war, which was the trying crisis to this country, and which closed in the year 1783, vast multitudes of people have emigrated from the New-England States, especially from Massachusetts and Connecticut, to the western parts of the State of New-York, and Pennsylvania, and to the State of Ohio. Churches have arisen in those western wilds, composed principally of those, who had been members of churches in New-England, on which have been shed down the blessings of heaven.

The extension of the Redeemer's kingdom, in the new settlements of our country, is to be ascribed, under the providence of God, to the timely and persevering exertions of Missionary Societies. It is now more than twenty years, since these Societies commenced their important and successful operations. The descendants of the pilgrims have taken the lead in this good work; and the funds, which, from various sources, have been raised, and which have been expended in spreading the gospel among the destitute, is beyond all estimation. Equally beyond all estimation have been the blessings diffused, by these exertions. Those, who have been the most active, and have principally sustained this labour, and borne the burden, have not impoverished themselves.

About ten years ago was originated, in Massachusetts, "The American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions." This has been a mighty engine, in the hands of God, for the pulling down of the

strong holds of Satan, among heathen nations. Through the widely extended operations of this Board, the churches and people of New-England, by the numerous little streams, which they have caused to flow into the treasury, are now extending a salutary influence to the natives of this land, and to the heathen idolaters, in different parts of the world. The establishment of the schools for the religious education of the children of the aborigines of this land, at *Brainerd* and *Eliot*, has presented to christians the most pleasing and animating prospects. Other establishments, for the same object, are commencing; and missionaries, schoolmasters and labourers, appear to be easily found, who are willing to go to any distance to aid in this work.

From New-England, the heralds of the Gospel have been sent to Bombay, Ceylon, Burmah, Palestine and Owhyhee. No sooner were the extensive fields of missionary labour explored, and the destitute state of many hundreds of thousands, perishing for lack of vision, made known, than the Lord stirred up the descendants of the pilgrims, not only to pray the Lord of the harvest to increase the number of labourers, but to be active in devising ways and means to effect this important object. The result of their deliberations and prayers was the establishment of "The American Society for the education of indigent and pious youth for the gospel-ministry." This Society, which originated in Massachusetts, has been in operation a number of years. It has many auxiliary branches, in different States, embracing both males and females, and promises extensive usefulness.

It is wonderful, my brethren, to reflect on the providence of God, in furnishing so many facilities, at the present time, for people of all ranks, and in all conditions of life, "to come to the help of the Lord against the mighty." In such a day as this, no person need be *idle*;—no person wants opportunity to sow that

kind of seed, which will hereafter spring up in a plentiful and glorious harvest. The ground is already prepared. And while speaking of the progress of religion in New-England, I should be guilty of an unpardonable omission to pass over unnoticed the monthly concert in prayer, which has furnished most favourable opportunities for the diffusion of religious intelligence, and to cherish, in the hearts of christians, a love for the Saviour, and a zeal for doing good. Not that this new effort in prayer is *confined* to New-England, nor that it originated here; but in New-England it has been generally observed, and, doubtless, has been the means of increasing the number of prayers in the churches, and of exciting greater fervency of spirit, in those who have called upon God.

The progress of literature may be noticed with honor to the descendants of the pilgrims. There are now in New-England eight Colleges, from which are graduated yearly not less than two hundred and seventy youths. Besides these there is an important and flourishing Theological Institution, at Andover, to which the churches are looking for a learned and orthodox ministry.

Among the pastors of the churches in New-England, there have been many "burning and shining lights;"—men, who received their academical education in our own Colleges;—men, whose Theological works are distinguished for their orthodoxy, and acuteness of reasoning; whose works are also read and admired, by the friends of evangelical truth, in other countries, and which have found their way iuto the libraries of the learned. Among these I will mention Edwards, Bellamy, Hopkins, Smalley and Dwight: With respect to the general diffusion of knowledge, and the support of common schools there is no part

of the world so highly favoured as New-England. Very few children are to be found among us, who are not taught to read and write, and who have not opportunity to search the Holy Scriptures for themselves. On the whole, the progress of religion and literature, in New-England, has been such as to call for our devout and grateful acknowledgments to that God, who planted our forefathers in this land, and endued them with such wisdom, in laying a foundation for the blessings, now enjoyed by their posterity.

I come to the last topic to be considered on this occasion,

IV. The settlement of the town of *Lee*, the rise of this branch of the visible church, and the dispensations of providence in relation to it.

The privations, hardships and struggles of our forefathers, of which we have had a brief view, have been realized, in some small degree, by the first settlers of every town and plantation. It is not to be forgotten, however, that the first planters of New-England were entirely without neighbours, excepting the uncultivated and barbarous savages. However pressing their necessities might be, they could send to no near nor distant settlement for relief. It was far otherwise with those, who first came into this town. There were English settlements, and some of considerable standing, all around them. The towns of Sheffield, Great-Barrington, Stockbridge and some others, had been settled for many years. The first man, who planted himself in this town, was Mr. Isaac Davis. This is a little short of sixty years ago. He erected a house in the south part of the town. Of his descendants, though considerably numerous, only two remain with us. Soon after, a settlement was begun near where the meeting-house now stands, by Mr. Pelatiah West from Tolland in Connecticut. He was followed by a number of families from the same town. The prin-

cipal part of those, who were the inhabitants of this town, thirty years ago, emigrated from Tolland, Barnstable, Sandwich and Falmouth.

The territory, embraced by what is now called the town of Lee, was originally a number of local grants, and was incorporated by the General Court, in the year 1777. On the 25th of May 1780, forty years ago, the professors of religion in this town, being about thirty in number, assembled and were organized into a church. The Rev. Daniel Collins of Lanesborough, who yet survives in the 83d year of his age, was, by their particular request, present on the occasion, and performed this business. As the basis of their union, they adopted the same Confession of Faith, which is acknowledged by the church, at the present time. Only *one* of the number that first covenanted together, an aged female, remains to this day. This small church had many opposers, in the town; and the ground of opposition was their adherence to the doctrines of grace. Mr. Abraham Fowler, was preaching to the people, as a Candidate, at the time the church was formed; and, immediately after, was invited to settle in the ministry, and take the pastoral charge of the church. The day of ordination was appointed to be on the 8th of June 1780;—and the council was convened, by letters missive. On this occasion, the church experienced a great trial and disappointment; for so many, in the town, united in a remonstrance against the settlement of Mr. Fowler, that the Council decided against proceeding to ordain him.

Having afterwards been favoured with the labours of Mr. Elisha Parmele of Goshen in Connecticut, the church, being satisfied with his qualifications for the ministry, united in giving him a call to settle. A Council was regularly convened for the purpose of ordaining him, on the 3d day of July 1783. To his being set-

tled, as a minister, there was also great opposition in the town, and some of the opposers appeared with their remonstrances before the Council; but, as Mr. Parmele, in view of all circumstances, consented to be ordained, the Council proceeded to set him apart to the work of the ministry, in this place.

The Rev. Mr. Parmele, as appears from the united testimony of all, who knew him, was sound in the faith, amiable in his disposition, distinguished for his talents and acquirements, and eminent for his piety: His health, however, soon failed, and his labours were of very short continuance. On the 13th of May 1784, at his request, the church, by their vote, consented, that he should journey to *Virginia*, with the hope of regaining his health. While prosecuting this journey, and near one hundred miles short of the place he intended to reach, he closed his mortal life. This church was then left, as sheep without a shepherd, surrounded by many, who were opposed to their religious sentiments. Though small, it was happily united; but the town was in a very divided state. Attempts were made, for eight years, to settle a minister without success; in which time, many candidates were employed. Whenever the church could unite, in giving one a call to be their teacher and spiritual guide, a formidable opposition would arise in the town, and disappoint their hopes. That the church, during this dark and trying period, was not rent and scattered, is worthy of special notice. Under the guidance and blessing of the great Head of the church, the union and preservation of the little flock, which was then here, are to be ascribed very much to the exertions, prudence and firmness of some of the leading members, who have since gone the way of all the earth. They were also assisted and strengthened by the labours, and counsels of the late venerable Dr. West of Stockbridge.

On the 6th of June 1792, the present pastor was ordained over this church and people. In making out the call for his settlement, the church had to witness again the same opposition in the town; but none appeared to remonstrate before the Council. In a few weeks after the ordination, it pleased God to shed down the influences of his Holy Spirit upon this people, in a wonderful manner. Such general solemnity, and such expressions of deep feeling and anguish, on account of sin, it is believed, have rarely been witnessed, in any place. There was little or no abatement of the attention among the people, and of the displays of sovereign grace, for eighteen months. This work of God's Holy Spirit, which was remarkably confined to the limits of the town, was followed by an accession to the church of more than one hundred persons. The former disputes of the people, on what were called "the hard doctrines," in a great measure subsided; their consciences seeming to testify in favour of the truth. Many who had taken their stand in opposition to the church, and the distinguishing doctrines of grace, were convinced, that they had always lived in error and darkness, and in a state of total alienation from God. They were compelled, notwithstanding their former opposition to divine truth, to make the interesting inquiry, "What shall we de to be saved?" This revival of religion produced a surprising change in the religious sentiments, and general aspect of the town. It effected a happy union;—a union, which, in some good measure, has continued to the present time. From that period, the inhabitants of this town have been signally favoured, in the providence of God, by being *kept together*; and the church, for the most part, has been blessed with peace and tranquility.

In the year 1800, the friends of Zion, in this place, enjoyed another season of refreshing from the presence of the Lord. The great body of the people were not affected as they were, in the first revival; but the

convictions of the awakened were clear, rational and pungent, and those, who received comfort appeared understandingly to embrace the doctrines of the cross, and exhibited evidence, in the judgment of charity, of having passed from death unto life. As a fruit of this work, twenty one persons, the most of whom were in the morning of life, were added to the church,

In the year 1806, a gracious God was again pleased to come into the midst of this people, by his Holy Spirit. This work resembled a plentiful shower from a small cloud. It was powerful and refreshing, indeed, in one part of the town, affecting more or less, in almost every family, before any special impressions were noticed, in other parts of the town. This work was followed, by an accession to the church of seventy one persons.

In the year 1813, soon after the distressing and mortal sickness, which prevailed in this town, a season, which will not be forgotten by the present generation, there was another harvest of souls. Twenty persons were then added to the church.

During the summer past, we have been favoured with some animating tokens of the special presence of Christ, and we have reason to hope there has been some addition to the friends of the Redeemer, from among the youth. The whole number of admissions to the church, since the ordination of the present pastor, is 379. The present number of members is a little short of two hundred. Many, who first joined themselves unto the Lord and his people, in this place, have removed from us, and are now members of churches in the western new settlements.

In the years 1800, and 1801, the house for the public worship of God, in which we are now assembled, was erected, and, on the last of November 1801, it

was dedicated to his immediate service. Here, for nineteen years, divine worship has been statedly maintained, and the ordinances regularly administered. The seasons for prayer and gospel-instruction, which we have enjoyed, in this house, have been many and precious.

We are bound to bless God, the Father of mercies, that the joyful news of pardon to the chief of sinners, is yet proclaimed to us, and to our children ;—proclaimed also in almost every part of New-England ;—proclaimed generally throughout our extensive and rapidly settling country ; and that its sound is spreading more and more, in distant continents and Islands. The Lord has illumined us, as he did our fathers, by the gospel of Jesus Christ, presenting to our view the happy prospect of a glorious immortality. The preaching of the gospel, and the lively ordinances of God confer more honor on any land, town or village than can be derived from all external distinctions. The gift of Christ to a lost world stands at the fountain-head of divine mercy. This is the source, from which flow all our blessings and privileges, our joys and hopes.

Let us, my brethren, on this interesting occasion, seriously inquire, why we are not now numbered among pagans ;—and why our children are not growing up, without any knowledge of the true God and Saviour, like the children of the unlettered savages? Why is not our land overspread with the delusions of Mahommed ? It is because the Lord hath done great things for us, by favouring us with the gospel of his Son. Destitute of this richest of heaven's blessings, how different would be the situation and prospects of New-England from what they now are ? Nothing can be mentioned, which has an influence so powerful and salutary, in restraining the corrupt passions of men, as the pure light of the gospel. No other means, which

a gracious providence has placed within the reach of men, is so favourable to good society. The influence of human laws, with all their sanctions and penalties, on the *morals of men*, is not to be compared with the influence of the gospel. To the truth of these remarks experience and observation bear testimony. We must feel ourselves, then, compelled to acknowledge, that God has been favourable unto this land.

From the heart of every individual, on this memorable occasion, should ascend to the Father of mercies devout Thanksgiving and Praise for the gift of his Son, and that our pious ancestors, whose sufferings, toils and zeal, we have reviewed, were at so much pains to transmit to their posterity the gospel and its institutions. On a similar occasion, we shall never meet again in this world. Before the return of another centurial celebration, the eyes of all of us, who are present, will have long been closed in death; our places will be occupied by others, and our names, and persons, and deeds, will be unknown, on the earth, as if we had never lived. Let us, then, "work while the day lasts," and "perfect holiness in the fear of God," that we may be approved, as faithful servants, and have evidence that our names are "written in the Lamb's book of life."

AMEN.